



Want to create more LGBTQ+ inclusive campaigns?

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Hi, everyone. My name is Amy Lindholm. And I'm a Global Learning lead and WPP's learning and development team. And I lead our Inclusion and Belonging Learning Strategy.

At WPP, we believe inclusion is a skill. And what I mean by that is that it requires knowledge, practice and action. That's why inclusion and belonging has become such a key priority of our global learning strategy, which drives not only our diversity, equity inclusion commitments, but also enables us to be more successful in new ways of working when you think about hybrid and also establishes a future-ready workforce.

This year, we've launched multiple global inclusion programmes designed to build inclusions of skill, including the inclusive leadership learning experience, our Future Readiness Leadership Series, and the LGBTQ Inclusive Marketing Learning Programme which is what we're here to talk to you about today.

I'm super excited about this collaboration between WPP Unite, brand equality, and the Global Learning Team. And we have some incredible panelists here today to talk to us about LGBTQ inclusive marketing. I'll now pass it over to Brian Elmer who's the EVP of Marketing Growth at BCW, a member of WPP's Global Inclusion Council, and the executive sponsor of WPP Unite in North America.

Thank you, Amy. That's important work that all of us can be proud of. I'm really excited to talk today about LGBTQ-plus inclusive marketing with Marion McDonald, WPP Global Client Lead and UK Change Lead for Unite, and Guy Duncan, Founder and CEO of Brand Equality.

I'm going to start with Guy who is no stranger to our industry, over 12 years of ad agency experience working on some of the world's most respected and creative brands. He spent over five years leading brand design as the Client Services director at WPP's Coley Porter Bell which led to his role at Coca-Cola where he spent eight years leading creative excellence, global content, and strategy.

In 2017, Guy left advertising to obtain a master's degree in Queer History. And in January of this year, he started Brand Equality, a consultancy which demystifies the world of LGBTQ-plus inclusive marketing.

So Guy, I have to start with the obvious. You worked in our industry with great success, including at some of our agencies before setting up brand equality. Why did you decide to leave and launch it?

I think three reasons. First of all, frustration-- frustration that every single June, mistakes were still being made in the pride marketing world and the arena. And that's rainbows will be draped over brands. And people would expect respect from the community because of this. And the rainbow hadn't been earned. And so there was that frustration.

And then there's the moment where brands are slightly-- they're afraid of the backlash of the community because there are so many pitfalls that you can come across. You can have rainbow washing and tokenism. And you can have homo-nationalism and all these problem areas that are quite difficult to unpack.

And so not knowing how to do it is a big issue in terms of how marketing has come up to this juncture in life. And so I thought that there was a gap in the marketplace. Plus also, I'm finished at Coca-Cola. And I'd wanted to do something with my marketing backgrounds within this whole area. And I wanted to go back and study. And I attained my Master's in Queer History.

And there's a huge knowledge gap in all of our lives, really, because none of us have been educated at high school level or at college level in LGBTQ Studies or history or education. And none of us have that background.

So, none of us know the one thing that unites us in our thing called the community is our fight for equality. And so the L's, the G's, the B's, the T's, we all have this discrimination against us in many different areas of life. And the thing that unites us is our path to equality.

And so to understand that, you have to look back. And you have to understand the journey. And you have to understand the history. And I thought I could fill that gap and fill that void.

Plus also, I mean, there is a dismal lack of representation in both the US and the UK in advertising and marketing when it comes to proportional representation. There are whole categories out there that just ignore us from DIY to automotive to vast sectors of insurance to huge amounts of kitchen equipment.

I mean, we use this stuff. We buy it. And we're just being ignored. It bugs me. So that's why I started brand equality. [LAUGHS]

I mean, it's interesting, especially since we've made such sort of big progress in Hollywood and representation on TV and in other media. Advertising seems to lag behind. Why do you think representation in marketing is still a challenge? And as importantly, what's the business imperative to overcome it?

I think the lag in this area has been that we've been allowed to get away with it for so long. There's been a lack of education, as I said. And so none of us have had this education. So, we naturally as an industry have shied away from what we don't understand and don't know and don't feel confident about. So I think that's one part of it.

The other part of it is that consumers haven't been demanding it. Up until now, the last few years, consumers-- and this is the business imperative-- there is an ethical stance to

this. There is a business opportunity target that we can all gain from. But the biggest thing is our consumers are driving the change.

And with our consumers driving that wonderful change, they are expecting more representation. They want more inclusivity. They actually reward clients and their brands with greater loyalty if this is included. And that is happening at an exponential rate over the last few years compared to previously. And that is the reason. That's the reason why business has to get hold of this area.

And actually, not just do it and check that box, but do it right and do it and follow the rules and understand what the pitfalls are, understand what the area is. It's a very complex area. There are lots of letters to get involved in.

The LGBTQ-plus, there's a huge, huge evolving in identity area. And it can put people off, I think. And because people are not very comfortable with it if they're in the mainstream, they tend to shy away from that. So, I think now's the time because the consumers are demanding it. But now's the time to do it right.

We talked about the lack of visibility. Are there examples of brands who are doing particularly well in ensuring representation in their work that you'd like to call out?

There are many more. And I don't know. I don't know if these are WPP brands or not. So, I apologise. So, I mean, the three that stood out to me recently in the last couple of years, there's a beautiful piece of work that Starbucks did I think as a response to a channel for competition.

But Starbucks is this beautiful thing about naming and using your name as this young transgender person tries out their new identity and tries out their new name. And it's a beautiful piece of film. It's very emotional. It's very gorgeous.

And it was a wonderful way of actually educating everybody about this whole area. And I think there's a huge amount of education to be done there. I think the Renault Clio anthem almost to a lesbian relationship last year was absolutely stunning, absolutely beautiful and was just beautifully done.

It wasn't cliched. It was just a wonderful piece of storytelling, a beautiful piece of copywriting wonderfully treated in the direction and the production afterwards. And then very, very lastly, Cadbury had literally-- they took a vignette in their Cadbury Creme Egg advertising. And they allowed a gay couple in lockdown to show us how they ate their creme egg.

It was wonderful. Yes, it was about 3 or 4 seconds of a 30-second ad. But it caused a storm, of course, an absolute storm. But it was just a wonderful way of treating it because it was integrated into the campaign. It was part of the long-term campaign idea.

But my God, did it cause a huge vocal outcry, which I loved. I think that was brilliant. And it was beautifully done because they've been an authentic cast couple. They were interracial. It understood the whole spectrum of intersectionality. And it was just a beautiful piece of vignettes directing within the whole frame of Creme Egg, which has

gone on for 30 years, I think, if not longer. But they're the three. I hope some of them will WPP, but I'm not sure. [LAUGHS]

Thank you, Guy. Great examples. Marion recently hosted a session with Guy for WPP client leaders to prepare them to hold more fluent conversations with our clients around LGBTQ-plus inclusion in our work. What were some of the key conversation openers shared in these sessions that we should all be looking out for?

Thanks for asking, Brian. And Guy, it's great to talk with you again. I can assure you that there was no Cadbury creme egg sharing going on in our household. If I had tried that with my British wife, she'd had been mortally upset that I'd tried to share her egg.

But getting back to those conversation openers, the exciting thing is that clients are running at the same pace as we are within WPP to get better representation right and to help people understand it. So clients are also looking for opportunities like how do we get recognised as an equal opportunity employer?

How do we get recognized as an LGBTQ-plus diversity employer-- stonewalled employer? How do we highlight and put forward for awards-specific individuals in the organisation be they allies or members of their queer community or leaders in their business who are really driving inclusion?

So, one of the conversation openers I recommend to anyone working with their clients is look out for where you see those awards won where you see people recognised in your client organisations. Simply watching on their LinkedIn and Twitter feeds to pick up on that news is a terrific way to start that conversation to go in well-informed about what's going in in their own organisation.

Another way is looking at what competitors are doing in their industry. If you see a Cadbury do it and you're not in that space, how do you start to move to catch up a little in that space? And the other way I look at it too is just looking around at some obvious gaps.

If you market skin care and you've never talked to transgender women, there's a pretty obvious gap for me. So, looking for the obvious gaps in your industry. But similarly, I completely agree with Guy. We use cheese and garbage bags and dishwashing detergent and pet food just as much. It doesn't have to be related to something very, very obvious.

You mentioned clients. And obviously that's what's most important to us. Any trends or new requests you're starting to see from clients to help them be more inclusive?

Yeah, I'm sure we're all saying this. But questions from clients increasingly, I've had questions in the last six to twelve months around. How do we put new questions into the creative brief to ensure that we are scanning and considering underrepresented audiences in our communications which is super exciting to see?

And then questions, really, most interestingly, very recently, questions from clients around can we quantify the diverse representation of the creative teams directly

working on our work? Now, obviously, it's a little troubling in that the clients have same challenge as us.

These are because of data protection and privacy and GDPR certainly in Europe and other global equivalents. You can't collect that data easily on employees and say, well, X% of the team is gay. X% has a hidden disability. X% has a racial background or a social mobility background that provides great diversity.

It's not quite as straightforward as that. But it's terrific that we're working together on how do we have more visibility of diverse representation in the teams developing the work?

As you know, this program was created with Unite. Our cross-agency LGBTQ-plus network which you and I are both involved in. What's ahead from Unite to drive better LGBTQ-plus audience insights to our client work?

Well, Unite is now global. So, you just launched brand, the chapter in North America. Congratulations. We're already very active in the UK. We're helping to start up further networks across Asia, Europe, and in also increasingly starting conversations in Africa, interestingly.

So, there is a lot more to come in terms of making this more global. But the most exciting thing I know that we're working on together at the moment is a study together with WPP's Choreograph on understanding better audience insight so that we're not just going to clients and saying, hey, let's do a piece of queer comms in here.

But we actually have really deep insight into how does that queer audience consume media? How do they hear about and communicate about brands? Are there any differences versus other diverse audience groups? And things like media planning. How do we consume media? Which media should we go to, to have those brands best communicating?

So, getting much deeper insight right across the spectrum, not simply from an audience insight so we can put more appropriate gay talent into ads.

Thank you. We are all really excited to see that Choreograph work. A big thank you, Marion and Guy and everyone out there watching. We want to hear from you. Please share any LGBTQ-plus case studies, work, initiatives that you're involved in for our collaborative resource hub on Inside WPP.

There's going to be a forum in which you can submit to WPP inside WPP. And if you want to find out more about Unite and how to get involved, reach out to Unite@WPP.com. Unite@WPP.com.

And now, we want to share our Unite Launch Video with all of you, which is also available to share and post on your social channels. It'll play us out. Thank you all for tuning in.